

Claims

[c1] What is claimed is:

1.A method to enable software options comprising the steps of:
receiving a request for activation of an inactive option in memory of a device located remotely from a centralized facility;
determining whether to activate the inactive option in response to the electronic request based on whether a set of criteria has been satisfied;
if unsatisfied, denying use of the inactive option;
if satisfied, generating an activation key configured to permit use of the inactive option upon installation in the device;
sending the activation key from the centralized facility to the device; and automatically installing the activation key and enabling the inactive option upon initialization of the device.

[c2] 2.The method of claim 1 wherein initialization of the device includes rebooting the device.

[c3] 3.The method of claim 1 wherein the device includes a medical imaging scanner and further includes the step of preventing activation of the inactive option during an imaging scan.

[c4] 4.The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
verifying activation of the inactive option; and
if verified, notifying a user of activation of the inactive option.

[c5] 5.The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of prompting a user for an authorization to install the activation key and receiving the authorization from the user prior to installation of the activation key.

[c6] 6.The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
accessing a graphic user interface (GUI) from a user station;
selecting the inactive option sought to activate; and
transmitting an option identifier to the centralized facility.

[c7] 7.The method of claim 6 further comprising the step of electronically

sending a user identifier and a system identifier to the centralized facility.

[c8] 8.The method of claim 1 wherein the step of receiving the request for activation of an inactive option further includes the steps of:
determining a host identifier;
determining a system identifier;
identifying a modality; and
identifying a use period including one of a trial use period, a limited use period, a pay-per use period, and an indefinite use period.

[c9] 9.The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of sending the request electronically.

[c10] 10.The method of claim 1 wherein the step of determining if the set of criteria has been satisfied comprises the steps of:
receiving a user identifier;
validating the user identifier; and
determining if a user status includes one of a delinquent account, an exhausted line of credit, a poor credit history, and a non-completion of training requirements.

[c11] 11.A system to enable an inactive software application resident in memory of a device comprising:
a computerized network;
a receiving center connected to the computerized network;
a processing station located within the receiving center having a processor, wherein the processor is configured to:
receive a request from a user for activation of at least one inactive software application resident on the device;
generate an electronic enabler configured to activate the at least one inactive software application;
transmit the electronic enabler from the receiving center to the device, wherein the device includes a remote processor programmed to:
control access to the at least one inactive software application;

verify transmission of the electronic enabler and if transmitted, determine a device operation status;

if in an active status, prohibit enablement of the at least one inactive software application; and

if in an inactive status, enable the at least one inactive software application.

[c12] 12.The system of claim 11 wherein the remote processor is further programmed to automatically initialize the at least one inactive software application only upon reboot of the device.

[c13] 13.The system of claim 11 wherein the remote processor is further programmed to automatically initialize the at least one inactive software application upon an authorization of the user.

[c14] 14.The system of claim 11 wherein the remote processor is further programmed to schedule a software application initialization in response to instructions from the user.

[c15] 15.The system of claim 11 wherein the device includes a medical device.

[c16] 16.The system of claim 15 wherein the medical device includes one of a cardiology device, a computed radiology device, a computed tomography device, a magnetic resonance imaging device, an x-ray device, an ultrasound device, a nuclear medicine device, and a positron emission tomography device.

[c17] 17.The system of claim 11 wherein the electronic enabler is electronically transmitted via a private communication line.

[c18] 18.The system of claim 11 wherein the receiving center is further configured to:

receive a user identifier;

validate the user identifier;

receive a user authentication code;

validate the user authentication code;

receive a system identifier; and validate the system identifier.

[c19] 19.The system of claim 11 wherein the electronic enabler is an alphanumeric software key.

[c20] 20.The system of claim 11 wherein the at least one processor is further configured to deny the request of the user in which the user is identified as having one of a delinquent account, an exhausted line of credit, an open credit history, and a non-completion of a training requirement.

[c21] 21.The system of claim 11 wherein an active status includes a device in operation.

[c22] 22.A computer data signal embodied in a carrier wave and representing a sequence of instructions which, when executed by at least one processor, causes the at least one processor to:
review, at a centralized facility, a request from a user to activate an inactive software application stored in memory of a medical imaging device located remotely from the centralized facility;
determine whether the user is qualified, and if so:
generate a software script designed to enable the software application;
transmit the software script from the centralized facility to the device; and enable the software application only during a reboot of the device.

[c23] 23.The computer data signal of claim 22 wherein the sequence of instructions further causes the processor to notify the user upon enablement of the software application.

[c24] 24.The computer data signal of claim 22 wherein a qualified user includes a user having a satisfactory billing account.

[c25] 25.The computer data signal of claim 22 wherein the software script is transmitted to the device over a private communication network.

[c26] 26.The computer data signal of claim 22 wherein the software application is

resident in memory of the medical imaging device.

[c27] 27. A software enabling system comprising:
a centralized facility;
a medical imaging scanner remotely located from the centralized facility and capable of receiving transmissions from the centralized facility, wherein the medical imaging scanner includes a computer having one or more inactive applications resident in memory of the computer; and
a data script creator designed to generate a data script configured to enable a selected inactive application, wherein the data script is further configured to automatically enable the selected inactive application only upon initialization of the device.

[c28] 28. The software enabling system of claim 27 wherein the data script creator is further configured to generate a data script specific to at least one of a system identifier, an application identifier, a user identifier, and a host identifier.

[c29] 29. The software enabling system of claim 27 wherein the centralized facility includes one or more computers configured to receive a request from a user remote from the centralized facility, wherein the one or more computers further includes a computer readable medium having thereon a set of instructions that when executed, causes the one or more computers to transmit the data script to the medical imaging scanner for automatic installation when the medical imaging scanner is inactive.

[c30] 30. The software enabling system of claim 29 wherein the one or more computers are further configured to determine satisfaction of a set of criteria, wherein the set of criteria includes:
a valid user identifier;
a valid system identifier; and
a qualified customer status.

[c31] 31. The software enabling system of claim 30 wherein a qualified customer

status includes a satisfactory billing status and a compliant training status.

- [c32] 32.The software enabling system of claim 27 wherein the data script is further configured to prevent enabling of the selected inactive application within the medical imaging scanner during device operation.
- [c33] 33.The software enabling system of claim 32 wherein the data script is further configured to prompt a user for authorization to enable the inactive application.
- [c34] 34.The software enabling system of claim 29 wherein the one or more computers are further configured to verify a transmission of the data script and notify a user of the transmission.